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## Towards a Postcolonial-storytelling Theory of Management and Organization

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# **Philosophy *of* Management**





# **Philosophy** *of* **Management**

PHILOSOPHY OF MANAGEMENT AS  
MOVING *BEYOND* CRITICAL AXIOLOGIES

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# Towards a Postcolonial-storytelling Theory of Management and Organisation

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Kenneth Jorgensen, Anete Strand and David Boje

*A contribution to management philosophy is made here by the development of a postcolonial-storytelling theory, created by drawing together parallel developments in quantum physics and tribal peoples' storytelling. We argue that these developments resituate the hegemonic relationship of discursive representationalism over material storytelling practices. Implications are two-fold. First, this dissolves inherent dualisms presumed in the concept of interaction among entities like actor–structure, subject–object and discursive–nondiscursive in favour of a profound ontology of entanglement and intra-action of materiality and discourse, where storytelling is a domain of this discourse. Second, postcolonial phenomena are understood as results of entangled genealogies in which plural voices are present. This implies an understanding and awareness of the intra-action of imperial narratives and material storytelling and antenarrative resistance, and thus the resistance and contestation to imperial and colonising monologic narratives of spatial and temporal alignment.*

## Introduction

**T**HIS ARTICLE CONTRIBUTES TO A philosophy of management by drawing together theory from an indigenous postcolonial interrogative of storytelling and the parallel theoretical work on the materiality of quantum physics known as 'agential realism' into an approach for the study of management and organisations; resulting in something that will be defined here as '*postcolonial storytelling*'.



What is agential realism? Developed by Karen Barad (2007: 181), the theory of agential realism links discourse and materiality to a non-positivistic realism whereby space, time and matter become viewed as mutually constituted through the dynamics of “iterative intra-activity” rather than as an *interaction*. Ironically, it is in ‘native’ American storytelling, which has been largely ignored in postcolonial theory and management philosophy, that one finds an important *intra-activity* of storytelling and materiality that is considered agential.

This article’s contribution is to show how a storytelling that emerges as a domain from material–discursive practices (e.g. Barad, 2007) can be a significant challenge to representational, structuralist narrative work in management and organisation studies.

We contend that postcolonial theory has focused on representational narrativist discourse to the exclusion of *material–agentive storytelling* practices and, in particular, those of ‘native’ American ‘indians’ (e.g. Allen, 1992; Cajete, 2000; Owens, 2001; Vizenor, 1998).<sup>1</sup> Our thesis is that discourse, without materialism, is seduced by representationalism and that, in particular, managerialist discourse erases and marginalises material–agentive aspects of storytelling. Much of the recent work in postcolonial studies focuses on discursive representationalism without inquiring into the material ordering.

This article is written in the belief that one of the important roles of philosophy of management as a particular discursive field is to contest other extant hegemonies in the thought of management and organisation theory, and to give space to marginalised others’ voices in understanding and shaping organisational storytelling. In this sense, the role of philosophy of management – at least as described in this paper – is inherently ethical, in the Levinasian sense that the postcolonial storytelling theory we develop implies an opening up towards experiencing the radical difference of the Other (e.g. Jones, Parker and Ten Bos, 2005: 76). The capital ‘O’ here denotes this specific approach to otherness as distinct from treating other human beings as objects, as similar to me/us or as any other human being.

Importantly though, the notion of Otherness is reconceptualised and expanded from Levinasian anthropocentric ethics towards a more ecocentric (e.g. Shrivastava, 2010: 445) ethics of mattering by means of agential–realist storytelling characterised as entangled being-of-the-world (neither being-in-the-world nor being-in-discourse, e.g. Taguchi, 2010) and where materiality, bodies and non-human nature are seen as agential and thus as inherently valuable and sacred as human beings and their needs.

We thus address and question the suppressive and colonising aspects of management discourse in a double sense: firstly, in the sense that this discourse has been suppressive of plural voices (in particular, native voices); and secondly, in that it remains trapped in a humanist orbit, emphasising the importance of discourse, language and culture whilst marginalising biology, nature and materiality. The latter point applies even to those aspects

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1 Throughout, lower-case ‘indian’ and ‘native’ are used, following Vizenor (1998), to denote a resistance to the coloniser and their Euro-american hyperreal simulations, since the Americas is not Columbus’s India and the ‘native’ is still being colonised.

of management discourse that declare it to be 'posthuman' in understanding humans as historical-discursive constructions (e.g. Wolfe, 2010).

A postcolonial-storytelling theory for management and organisation studies achieves several results. First, it draws attention to how storytelling and materiality are profoundly entangled and intra-active rather than interactive. This implies a democratisation of material and human voices, in that materiality is granted a far more powerful voice in understanding organisational action.

Second, a postcolonial-storytelling theory perceives phenomena in organisations as part of a web of complex relationships and entangled genealogies, which comprise both colonisers and colonised/neocolonised. Postcolonial storytelling thus produces an awareness of antenarrative resistance and contestation to imperial and colonising narratives. Story-in-the-making and antenarrative-in-the-making are both active participants in the process of materialisation, not just discursive representations, and are oppositional to reified, static, petrified narrative representations in management studies (Czarniawska, 2004).

Third, it becomes possible to study the intra-play of dominant colonising and post-colonising retrospective narratives with the liberatory countermoves of living stories and antenarrating.

The paper is organised as follows: firstly, we argue that it is necessary to go beyond representationalism and replace it with an approach we call 'postcolonial storytelling', which is characterised by the intra-activity of materiality and discourse. Next, we review the indigenous, postclassical narrative and quantum physics approaches to material-agential storytelling. Thirdly, we develop implications for management and organisation studies.

## *Beyond Representationalism*

Arendt contends that the ability to speak a language is what makes an actor an actor. It is through the spoken word that the actor identifies what he does, has done and intends to do (Arendt, 1998: 178–9). She proposes that language is multiple, that meaning is co-constructed through storytelling and that this storytelling is always concerned with the matters of the world. However, she maintains the term 'interaction' and thus the idea that separate entities (i.e. language and matter) interact – where language is ruling over matter.

Wittgenstein (1953/1983) uses the concept *language games* to describe how meaning is co-constructed; a process characterised as inter-subjective, unfinished, unresolved, dialogical, multiple, spontaneously emergent, situational and contextual. As such, language is seen as woven together with actions and deeply embedded in a material world. Nonetheless, the term 'language games' has probably been complicit in producing a hegemonic perception of language over materiality where agency subsequently has been located in the realm of speech just as Arendt suggested.

In any case, Barad contends that language has been granted too much power (2007: 132). Referring to this obsession with language-as-representationalism, where focus

is on correspondence between descriptions and reality (Barad, 2007: 135), she argues that this characterises both social constructivist and traditional realist approaches. Representationalism is thus a discursive construction that is an effect of the apparatus of modernity, which separates things into entities, and of constructing dualities of language (actors, meaning) and materiality (structures, matter).

As well as Barad, Dorothy Smith (1990) goes beyond the hegemonic relationship of discourse over materiality and introduces a “new materialism”, which we see as one way to rethink postcolonial theory and method with major implications for management and organisation studies. One implication is to replace interaction with intra-action, a term which denotes the profound entanglement of language and matter (i.e. actor and structure, human and nature etc.). Strand (2010) follows Barad in developing the term ‘material storytelling’ as an intra-action of the material and the discursive. She argues that this move resituates and democratises the relationship between the discursive and the material in such a way that both are presumed to have agency.

Subsequently, our approach to storytelling is defined as something agential such as the iterative intra-active material-storytelling domains of ‘living stories’ and ‘antenarratives’ in the theatre of action. This goes beyond the classical narrative focus on structuralist and representationalist elements and retrospection (Boje, 2001, 2008). In the linguistic turn, narrative is just words – in texts, language, grammar and structures of representation.

McCloskey (1990) contends that economists are storytellers and often construct narratives with a beginning, a middle and an ending – their own preferred ending. Living story, on the other hand, is in a time and place of collectively lived participation with the world that is here and now (e.g. Jørgensen and Boje, 2010). Living stories are stories-in-the-making, part of the theatre of action, a material way of being that is performative, enacted and embodied – and a part of “gender-in-the-making” (Barad, 2007: 87), as well as race-in-the-making, class-in-the-making and (post)-colonialism-in-the-making.

Antenarrative is defined both as that which is ‘before’ narrative stability and as a ‘bet’ that material transformation has storytelling agency (Boje, 2001, 2008). Antenarrative is more about what Gioia and colleagues (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Gioia et al., 1994; Gioia and Mehra, 1996; Gioia and Thomas, 1996) refer to as ‘prospective’ sensemaking than the ‘retrospective’ approaches of management (Weick, 1995) or (classical) narrative representationalism and structuralism.

Antenarrative is performative in its materialising engagement with the world and being, part of its becoming (materialisation) and ‘eventness’ (e.g. Bakhtin, 1993). Antenarratives have material agency and answerability for remaking and reshaping the world into many possible futures (Morson, 1994). Antenarratives are a bridging of narratives stuck-in-place to living stories, on-the-move, founding spaces (de Certeau, 1984). Antenarrative processes are iterative, performative, in “spacetime-mattering” ways of making/marking the future, whereas living story (story-in-the-making) is an enactment of differences “making/marking here and now” (Barad, 2007: 315, 137).

We find examples of intra-active material storytelling in “native American Indian” storytelling, which however has been marginalised in organisation and management

studies and in post-colonial scholarship, according to Louis Owens. He refers to Edward Said (1993): “this celebrated father of postcolonial theory dismisses Native American writing in a single scathingly imperial phrase as ‘that sad panorama produced by genocide and cultural amnesia which is beginning to be known as “native American literature”’” (Owens, 2001: 172–3).

Homi Bhabha is totally silent about indigenous Native American writing. A lonely exception is Trinh Minh-ha’s (1989) inclusion of Leslie Marmon Silko’s storytelling and passing mentions of the native American writers Momaday, Joy Harjo, Vizenor and Linda Hogan. Another notable exception to this exclusion of indigenous storytelling is found in Jack and Westwood’s (2009: 277) reference to indigenous ‘storytelling research’ as an agenda described by Smith (1999) “to decolonise methodology with names such as claiming, testimonies, storytelling, remembering, intervening, gendering, democratising, protecting.” However, there are no ‘native’ American writers included and ‘native’ American writing is not addressed.

Perhaps postcolonial theory had more of a focus on narrative devices early on and then refocused more on discursive representationalism. Edward Said’s *Orientalism* has over 30 references to narrative, such as: “The things to look at are style, figures of speech, setting, narrative devices, historical and social circumstances, *not* the correctness of the representation nor its fidelity to some great original” (1979: 21).

In another example, Said (1979: 162) is critical of how “narrative order” is manipulated by writers such as Lane, by adding detail to foil narrative movement in order to delineate some characterisation of Egyptians. A narrative is then only a formality: “What prevents narrative order, at the very same time that narrative order is the dominating fiction of Lane’s text, is sheer, overpowering, monumental description” that makes “Egypt and the Egyptians totally invisible” to the reader.

Similar narrative critique is made of Chateaubriand’s “egoistic Oriental memoirs” (Said, 1979: 175). Said’s most severe critique is of the way Burton “steer[s] a narrative” (ibid.: 195) in a colonising way by acquiring detailed knowledge about the “Orient by living there, actually seeing it firsthand.” But this is still in “domination over all the complexities of Oriental life” as “his victory over the sometimes scandalous system of Oriental knowledge, a system he had mastered by himself”. In short, Burton “had taken over the management of Oriental life for the purposes of his narrative” order (ibid.: 196).

One reason for a marginalisation of indigenous material–agential storytelling practices is that the focus on discourse in postcolonial studies has often privileged European–American ideologies of representation over the study of materiality and history. Colonialism involves material practices, such as “physical conquest, occupation, and administration of the territory of one country by another” (Prasad, 2003: 5).

Prasad points out that the material practices of contemporary imperialism (or neo-colonialism, despite decolonising resistance) have taken new forms, other than colonial occupation – a prime example being the role of powerful administrative institutions such as the WTO, World Bank, IMF and so on. Prasad’s edited book contains many references to indigenous writers in Asia, Africa, Australia and New Zealand but ignores native American Indian ones.

Next, we review the indigenous, postclassical narrative and the quantum physics

approaches to material–agential storytelling; then, at the end of the article, we develop the implications for management and organisation studies.

## *Towards an Indigenous Material–agential Storytelling Praxis*

For most indigenous peoples, story is not the same as Western (or classical) narrative, possibly because “Indigenous peoples across the world have other stories to tell” such as “the history of Western research through the eyes of the colonized” or how “counter stories are powerful forms of resistance which are repeated and shared across diverse indigenous communities” (Smith, 1999: 2).

Rather, storytelling for indigenous peoples is a methodology for “resist[ing] new forms of colonization” and a means of “critical analysis of the role of research in the indigenous world” (Smith, 1999: 5). Smith is not finished with colonialism and prefers to decolonise, rather than postcolonising. She rejects “the idea that the story of history can be told in one coherent narrative” (ibid.: 31). To decolonise, for Smith, means recovering stories of the past that were marginalised: “telling our stories from the past, reclaiming the past, giving testimony to the injustices of the past” as strategies “employed by indigenous peoples struggling for justice.” (ibid.: 34–5)

While there has been indigenous scholarship recognised in the work of postcolonial theorists, there has been widespread neglect of native American indian critical scholarship. We look to this next.

### *Lower-case ‘native’ American ‘indian’ Storytelling*

Much of the native American writing about storytelling has a focus on materiality not found in classical Western narrative, and only at the margins of postclassical narrative and postcolonial writing. Gerald Vizenor (1994, 1996, 1998, 1999), for example, applies post-structuralist (Derrida, Foucault) and postmodern (Baudrillard, Debord) thought, critical theory (Adorno) and dialogical theory (Bakhtin) to invoke a version of living stories that is a resistance to dominant, coloniser narrative.

Vizenor’s (1998: 1) approach makes use of the concept of “storiers of presence... that actuate the sovenance and totemic observance of nature.” In his new vocabulary, the word ‘Indian’ with a capital ‘I’, for Vizenor, is a hyperreal “simulation and loan word of dominance” indicating an ‘absence’ continued in U.S. master narratives; whereas the lower-case ‘indian’ is “an ironic case” of ironic presence (ibid.: 14, 27).

“The *indian* has no native ancestors; the original crease of simulation is Columbian”; “The native stories of survivance are successive and natural estates; survivance is an active repudiation of dominance, tragedy, and victimry”; “*Sovenance*” is defined as “that sense of presence in remembrance, that trace of creation and natural reason in native stories” and is not “aesthetic absence or victimry” (ibid.: 15).

Stories connote a special sense of materiality, what Vizenor (1998: 15) calls '*transmotion*', defined as "that sense of native motion and an active presence [that] is *sui generis* sovereignty" and "a reciprocal use of nature, not a monotheistic, territorial sovereignty." The transmotion of ledger art is a creative connection to the motion of horses depicted in winter counts and heraldic hide paintings" (ibid.: 179).

Storied transmotion is a material "presence in stories, an actual presence in the memories of others, and an obviative presence as semantic evidence"; in a Bakhtinian sense, it is "a dialogical circle" (ibid.: 169) and "in a 'dialogical context', the conversions of [ethical] answerability" (ibid.: 27). Stories are a transmotion and a virtual sense of presence in animated and embodied native memories that includes, in a posthumanist philosophy, animal memories (ibid.: 170).

Colonialism is a narrative of domination where conquered rights of transmotion, land sovereignty and natural material reason are decided by conquerors (ibid.: 181–2). "The monotheism and monologic of Western narrative is "dominance over nature; transmotion is natural reason, and native creation with other creatures" (ibid.: 183).

Gregory Cajete's (2000: 23) *Native Science* also privileges story over Western narrative, theorising its material-agentive force: "Native science is an echo of a pre-modern participation with the non-human world." Storytelling is a way of participation in, and is interdependent with, material conditions of a living life-world. Colonising "animism continues to perpetuate a modern prejudice, a disdain and a projection of inferiority toward the world view of indigenous people" (ibid.: 27).

For Cajete, participation with its material surroundings gives "animism: a modern human sensibility": "indeed all humans are animists." (ibid.: 27) For Cajete, animism is (posthumanist) attention to interdependence of humans with "elegant cycles of metamorphosis, transformation, and regeneration that form the basis of all life on Earth."

Critical to this paper is the concept of story that has material agency as well as ethical answerability. By implication, living story can be defined as an animating material perspective on nature as vitally materialising that is agentive. Living story, on the other hand, is direct, material, physical experience, "a primal affinity between the human body and other bodies of the natural world" (ibid.: 24).

Living story therefore has agency: "in this sense, community itself becomes a story, a collection of individual stories that unfold through the lives of the people in that community" (ibid.: 95). This relational agential interdependence comes with an ethical answerability to give back to the nature that sustains all life: "keeping true to all of one's relationships, which means keeping true to all our primal responsibilities, compacts, and alliances with the natural world" (ibid.: 74).

Euro-American narrative, by contrast, is a second-order representational experience of being in interdependent relationship with the world. Narrative is a representational blueprint or map, "detached" and "estranged" (ibid.: 24).

Greg Sarris (1993: 4, 21–2) stresses that stories have a time, a place and an owner, adding that storytelling "can work to oppress or to liberate, to confuse or to enlighten." He cites Schwartzman's (1984: 80) observation that in organisation settings "stories... can generate

organizational activity (not just comment on it) and interpret and sometimes transform the work experience” (cited in Sarris, 1993: 156).

Sarris breaks with the retrospective narrative and looks to a more antenarrative temporal perspective, asking “what is going to happen” to a young Saddle Lake Cree girl whose teacher put her in the “corner with a coloring pad and crayons while the other students worked on computers” (1993: 159)? Each student in Sarris’s class then added their antenarratives, co-constructing a collective story that bridged their own personal experiences, as Crees, with discrimination in the schools.

Thus, the collective antenarrative was a way to talk back to the dominant institutional narratives of colonial education and to establish an ethical answerability. For Sarris, who, like Vizenor, cites and extends Bakhtin’s work, there is a gap between narrative-as-text and storytelling as interactive orality about day-to-day life struggles. The relevance of Bakhtin (1973, 1981) is in the focus on the “kind of internal dialogue where the interlocutors examine the nature of their own thinking... carried over to an ever-widening context of talk, stories, and conversation” (Sarris, 1993: 30).

Robert Allen Warrior (1995) identifies ‘native’ American intellectual traditions and is critical of their essentialism. His critique includes Ward Churchill and M. Annette Jaimes’ essentialist idealism, which sees the native American Indian as being part of a global consciousness shared with other indigenous people, and Paula Gunn Allen’s feminist gynocentric spirit-formed consciousness.

Such essentialist positions do, however, offer a “strong counternarrative to the received academic and popular understanding of American Indian people and cultures” (Warrior, 1995: xvii). A third stream Warrior identifies is anti-essentialist. These writers include Jack Forbes, Jimmie Durham and Gerald Vizenor, who stress the analysis of material economic and sociocultural conditions lost in the essentialist discourse. Indeed, the more post-modern literature and theory of Vizenor has been so successful in its anti-essentialism that Churchill and Jaimes’ more recent work shows less concern for an essentialist global world-view and focuses more on a hard-line political agenda.

Warrior’s main concern in promoting critical discourse is that there is (1) an avoidance of internal critique by opting only to critique non-Indian scholarship and U.S. society; (2) few works of American Indian literature have a nuanced storytelling of contemporary variety or generational history of American Indian intellectual production (Warrior, 1995: xix); (3) the discourses continue to be obsessed with questions of Indian identity and authenticity (i.e. quantum blood essentialism) and sidestep critical discourse questions, such as an Indian future (ibid.: xix).

Warrior stresses examples of a more critical discourse in the writing of Deloria and Mathews. Warrior’s reading is that both are focused on a “process-centered and a materially-based” approach to storytelling, which can successfully address issues raised in “postcolonial literary critical discourses” (ibid.: xxiii). Warrior prefers a more nuanced storytelling, which traces the contextual historical themes, and nuanced descriptions of the weaknesses of sociopolitical strategies in the midst of oppression.

In particular, the material conditions for the community of a land stripped of irreplace-



able topsoil by several droughts, settled by colonisers and now cluttered with oil wells reveal that “after less than a century of Euro-American domination, the land [had become] bereft of millions of buffalos and other animals and could no longer bear, without chemicals and modern machinery, the agricultural system that had replaced these animals” (Warrior, 1995: 59).

Paula Gunn Allen has a material–agential storytelling perspective missed by Warrior. The tribal ways are rooted in “the oral tradition [that] has prevented the complete destruction of the web [of identity that long held tribal people secure], the ultimate disruption of tribal ways” (1992: 45). Allen argues that the tribal person “knows that living things are subject to processes of growth and change as a necessary component of their aliveness” and “is not symbolic in the usual sense” because it also has a “material dimension” (Allen, 1992: 62).

Allen recounts how Fred Young, the Navajo physicist, explained timespace: “if you hold time constant, space went to infinity, and when space was held constant time moved to infinity.... The tribal sense of self as a moving event within a moving universe is very similar to the physicist’s understanding of the particle within time and space” (Allen, 1992: 147). Tribal peoples’ storytelling is to “embody, articulate, and share reality” and to “actualize” and shape its direction with “the forces that surround and govern human life and the related lives of all things” (ibid.: 56). In a quantum physics sense, all of life is living, dynamic and interconnected, and not an “opposition, dualism, and isolation (separation) that characterizes non-Indian thought” (ibid.: 56).

The difference for Allen between the Western narrative and tribal people’s storytelling is that the former is hierarchical and dualistic whereas the other “does not rely on conflict, crisis, and resolution for the organization” (ibid.: 59) and does not “draw a hard and fast line between what is material and what is spiritual” (ibid.: 60).

In sum, there appears to be an important agential role of materiality in living story and antenarrative that is beyond narrative representationalism. Living story is not merely about humans, since it is a posthumanist materiality; nor is storying just about material words or texts, since it is orality, acting out or a drawing that depicts transmotion well beyond the limits of Western *homo narrans*.

There are two movements that can be related to a material storytelling one that could apply to management studies. First is the work of postclassical narrative (which is still wedded mostly to a representationalist discourse but does critique classical structuralism). The second is a brand of quantum physics, which takes a materiality-discursive approach (one that seems to be parallel to the materiality forces, such as transmotion, reviewed in the ‘native American indian’ work). We look at these next.

### *Postclassical Narrative*

Matti Hyvärinen (2007: 1) says classical narrative “scholars often wanted to see stories from the perspective of grammars and structures” in conventional terms – for example, working with the Propperian classification of fairytales rather than having to address counternarratives that raise ethical and contextual issues.

One could add Aristotle’s *Poetics*, Russian Formalism and American structuralism



(e.g. Bruner's story grammar (Bruner, 1986: 14)) to this classical narrativist's focus on the internal structure of narrative. "The vocabulary of counter-narratives, vis-à-vis master, dominant or hegemonic narratives and cultural scripts, works in a different way and aptly foregrounds the variety of narratives and resists any narrative essentialism" (Hyvärinen (2007: 1). And it is here that we shall see that the Achilles heel of managerialist and organisation studies is narrative structuralism.

Gerald Prince (2005: 372) declares that, "In spite of this proliferation of discourses pertaining to (the systematic study of) narrative, there have been few proposals for or elaborations of a postcolonial narratology (see, e.g., Fludernik, 1996; Gymnich, 2002)." One could add Bamberg (2004a, 2004b) and Caldwell (1999) to the list. Indeed, there have been important approaches suggested in postclassical literary studies for a postcolonial narratology but not for a postcolonial 'material-agentive storytelling' approach – and none have referenced 'native American indian' scholarship.

That said, there are traces of a materiality theory in some of the postclassical narratology work that could bridge to the 'native American indian' storytelling reviewed above, and hopefully pose something new for postcolonial studies of managerialism. Prince's proposal for a postcolonial narratology draws upon a postclassical narrative lens. Prince wants to construct a postcolonial narratology that expands the representational narrative from written text to oral, or sign language, or moving pictures, or any combination thereof (2005: 373).

However, his definition of narrative is limited to modes of narrative representation and those that meet the standard of a minimum of plot-structural coherence; and his proposal for a postcolonial narratology looks at representations of space, time and motion in the minimally coherent narrative structures. Space is analysed in narrative, by looking at whether it is "explicitly mentioned and described, prominent or not, stable or changing, perceiver-dependent or, on the contrary, autonomous, characterized by its position or by its constituents" (Prince, 2005: 375).

Similarly, temporality is to be analysed for its "relative explicitness, precision, and prominence" and for its temporal action: "straight, cyclical, or lopping, regressive as opposed to progressive" (Prince, 2005: 375). Prince's postcolonial narratology aims to "account for the kinds of characters inhabiting these spatial and temporal settings and to supply instruments for the exploration and description of their significance, their complexity, the stability of their designation and identity" (ibid.: 375).

Throughout, Prince gives references to literary studies but not to any native American literary ones or to the material-agential aspects of storytelling. Prince is not willing to move out of representation or depiction and into material conditions of a postcolonial narratology. His version of postcolonial narratology is ironic in that it claims to move beyond the structuralism of classical narratologies yet, in the end, remains anchored to "narrative structures and configurations" which suggest "postcolonial affinities" (ibid.: 379). Two other proposals follow this path.

Marion Gymnich's (2002: 62) version of postcolonial narrative focuses on the linguistic representational identity: "categories of ethnicity, race, class and gender are constructed,

perpetuated or subverted in narrative texts.” Postcolonial narratologists can look at the hierarchical relationship between postcolonial and minority literature, “including privileged positions within the text” (Gymnich, 2002: 69) or “characters marked by a foreign language” (ibid.: 70).

Monika Fludernik’s (1996: 366) proposal for postcolonial narrative refers to “ethnic and postcolonial studies” that “could be analyzed from a narratological perspective.” She argues that there are several productive links between postclassical narratology and an analysis of postcolonial narratives, such as a study of the use of ‘odd’ pronouns (‘one’, ‘you’ or ‘we’ narratives) to illuminate a narratorial ‘we’ to get at the temporal spatial, moral, linguistic and intellectual distances between narrator, narratee and characters (as cited in Prince, 2005: 375).

Fludernik looks, as well, at the category ‘person’ in first-person, second person and multi-personed narration, and at the ‘white British’ voice and the use of ‘native English idiom’ in “more recent postcolonial texts”, and recommends looking at “ethnic protest literature” that in her view has “used traditional modes of narration, and some experimental fiction [that] is inveterately esoteric and degage.” (1996: 366–7)

Outside of Prince, Gymnich, and Fludernik’s representational and linguistic identity in postcolonial narrative, postcritical work by Boehmer (1993), Durant (2004) and Mputubwele (1998) is not mentioned at all. And these others do not address an intra-play of materiality and discourse, or the kinds of materiality of spacetime in the ‘native indian’ American works reviewed above. Fortunately, there are other approaches to postclassical narratology that do venture further across the divide between storytelling and materiality.

First, Daniel Punday’s (2000) corporeal narratology focuses on the human body, paying more attention to embodiment, to ‘what’ body is being represented, instead of the structuralist elements of narrative. Corporeal narrative is a way of sorting bodies into types, such as in racist narratives obsessed with a relationship between civilisation or intelligence, skin color, or the shape of heads, noses, eyes and lips, and so forth: “as in the notion that lighter skins imply intelligence and greater degrees of civilization” (ibid.: 231).

The human body has been discussed in classical, postclassical and postcolonial narratives but the narratological issues have not been addressed. Instead of the material-corporeal, the focus is on how the female body, the colonised body and the coloniser’s body are represented in various narrative texts: “how certain ways of thinking about the body shape the plot, characterization, setting, and other aspects of narrative” (ibid.: 228). Punday, like Prince, Fludernik and Gymnich, is caught up in representationalism, not in narrative’s relationship to the (corporeal) materiality of the body.

Second, extensions of Martin Bamberg’s (2004a, 2004b, 2005) work can be made to living story intra-active materiality and agency. In ‘story-as-interactive’ discourse in conversation, it is feasible to pay close attention not only to representational characterisations of race, gender, class and power but also to “time and space coordinates in the way that these relate to social categories and their action potential” (Bamberg, 2004a: 225).

This way of analysing story-talk-in-interactions (Boje, 1991) traces how interactional-living-story-talk is “complicit with and/or countering dominant discourses (master

narratives)” (Boje, 1991: 225). Bamberg claims narrative is straightjacketed when it comes to explaining the lives of real people. Bamberg’s focus is on “what people *do* when they talk and what they *do* when they tell stories” (2005: 215). He wants to move away from the cognitive approach to narrative (privileging one active teller) – exchanges between talking heads and the classical structuralist narrative theory that reduces all to written text structural patterns embedded in context (ibid.: 218). Stories-in-situated-interaction focalises “human sense-making in the form of emergent processes” (Bamberg, 2004a: 225) and “order[s] characters in space and time... revealing character transformations in the unfolding sequence from past to future” (Bamberg, 2004b: 354).

We turn next to a look at a parallel approach to storytelling agential materiality in the works of Barad and Smith that is central to ‘native American indian’ scholarship and, except for Punday and Bamberg, peripheral to postclassical attempts to fashion a postcolonial narratology.

### *Karen Barad’s Materialising-agential Theory*

As noted, Barad’s *agential realism theory* views practice as material–discursive intra-action, where the latter represents a profound conceptual shift (2007: 139). Barad assumes (ibid.: 181–2) discourse and materiality are intra-playing, not separated as in classical approaches to mechanistic physics or classical discourse and narrative. While Barad does not look at storytelling per se, she does address discourse – and storytelling is for us a domain of discourse, in the important sense that the discursive is always already material as well as the other way around. Materiality and discourse do not stand in a relationship of exteriority to each other (ibid.: 151–2).

The implication is that storytelling, as material–discursive practice, is sedimenting historicity practices where “time has a history” (ibid.: 180); “Time is not a succession of evenly spaced identical moments” (ibid.) as it is conceived in classical narrative. “Space is not a collection of preexisting points set out in a fixed geometry, for matter to inhabit” (ibid.). “Matter does not refer to fixed substance” (ibid.: 151). “*Matter is a stabilizing and destabilizing process of iterative intra-activity*” (ibid.).

The relevance of materialising–agential theory to postcolonial theory can be seen in Said’s (1978: 1) work where geography is not a physical fact, but a “European invention” and “one of... [Europe’s] deepest and recurring images of the Other” (as cited in Prasad, 2003: 11). It is through agential intra-actions that story-in-the-making has material interplay producing, and produced by, (in part) the world.

Story-in-the-making is intra-activity, not synonymous with language or discourse, or just a speech act or marks on a text. Story-in-the-making is intra-active with material practices. Stories-in-the-making are not preexisting objects, instead being agentially enacted intra-actively with materiality-agency, in the now and here of Bakhtinian eventness.

Instead of representational narrative or self-reflexive narrative, gazing at oneself, Barad looks to Donna Haraway’s (1992: 299) diffractive method: “the rays from my optical device diffract rather than reflect. These diffracting rays compose interference patterns, not reflecting

images.” In contrast to both retrospective–representational and reflexivity–narrative that abstract sameness, story-in-the-making is *diffractive* of differences that make a difference in the world, and is part of world’s differential becoming as “*specific material engagements that participate in (re) configuring the world*” (Barad, 2007: 90, italics in original).

### *Dorothy Smith’s New Materialism Theory*

Smith is concerned about relations of ruling that might be studied from a feminist standpoint, using an ethnomethodological approach to revise Marxist material conditions (see Myers’ (2009) study of university women professors). Smith (1990: 43–4) looks to Marx’s *The German Ideology* for three tricks, which I am adapting here to new-materialism storytelling:

**Trick 1** – Separate what people storytell from the actual circumstance in which it was story-in-the-making, grounded in actual material conditions of their lives and from the actual storytellers who talked it.

**Trick 2** – Having detached narrative representations from material conditions, and from who talked what living stories-in-the-making and antenarratives-in-the-making, arrange the fragments into an ordered and coherent narrative abstraction full of “mystical connections” (ibid.: 43).

**Trick 3** – Change the representations into a virtual narrative, setting virtual person to narrate entities (value patterns, norms, belief systems and so forth) in which agency or causal efficacy is attributable to virtual characters who are substituted to articulate the representational entities.

These three tricks of narrative erasure of living story and/or antenarrative-in-the-making substitute virtual agency for causality in what Smith (1990: 44) terms an ‘*ideological circle*’. The relevance to postcolonial theory is that a focus on discourse (representations of gender, race, class), without attention to storytelling-materiality, makes the three tricks invisible.

It is this process of narrative hegemony that is relevant to postcolonial studies because it produces material effects and is accomplished in material circuitry, albeit through virtual agential attribution brought about by managerialist and institutional sensemaking practices that mark/make sameness out of differences. The implication from Smith (1990: 36) is that narrative representationalism “neglects the sensuous, living aspects of existence” as embedded in material conditions of people’s actual storytelling practices, which constitute ideology sociohistorically.

This is not to say that narrative representationalism is groundless. Narrative representation is part of the co-ordering of regulative managerialist sensemaking, which in Smith’s (1990: 42) terms is a kind of “‘currency’ – a medium of exchange among ideologists and a way of thinking about the world that stands *between* the thinking and the object.” For

Barad (2007), it is a Cartesian duality of subject and object. See, Myers' (2009) application of Smith's feminist standpoint to how academic women frame success and are framed by higher-education narrative processes.

Academic reflexivity could be about being answerable (in a Bakhtinian ethical sense) for one's standpoint. As Nietzsche declares, there is no neutral place to stand. Derrida (1979: 94), like Dorothy Smith and Bakhtin, also sees narratives as hegemonic because they become terroristic inquisitions, posing as a logocentrism. Living stories of resistance can disrupt monologic narrative order.

Next we summarise the philosophical implications and apply them to organisation and management theory.

### *Implications for Organisation and Management Theory*

The proposed 'postcolonial material-storytelling' theory, method and intervention practices have philosophical implications that open up several possibilities for organisation and management studies.

First, the theory draws attention to how storytelling and materiality are profoundly entangled and intra-active rather than interactive. For Barad, this is accomplished by her agential–realist elaboration of Bohr's notion of apparatus. Her account of discourse is thus different from Foucault's notion of discursive practice, which she describes as "the local sociohistorical material conditions that enable and constrain disciplinary knowledge practices such as speaking, writing, thinking, calculating, measuring, filtering and concentrating" (Barad, 2007: 147).

Even if materiality is important for Foucault, it is still a subordinated discourse, which enables and constrains materialisation and not the other way around (where materiality to a higher degree would govern what can be said and done). This captures the difference between Foucault and Bohr in the sense that apparatuses for Bohr are the particular physical arrangements and conditions that enable and constrain knowledge practices (Barad, 2007: 147). So postcolonial storytelling would insist on the materiality of meaning making where a more equal and democratic relationship is accomplished between language and matter such that living storytelling becomes situated in activities, relations and material conditions that co-order and co-produce people's lives.

For Smith, material discourse is an ethnomethodological accomplishment from the *standpoint* of women. Classical narrative deprives us of access to the living storyability and antenarratability of sociohistorical processes. Extending Smith (1990: 42), such storytelling is to "suppress its grounds in our active engagement with the world."

One implication of Smith and Barad's 'new materialist' approaches to discourse for storytelling is that we must attend more to how storytelling works and how it puts together our world by studying how storytelling happens on ontological grounds, in the world. A story and storytelling are the result of the ontic and the semantic; they emerge from mate-

rial-discursive conditions where some stories become more possible and likely than other stories.

As noted, this implies a democratisation of material and human voices in understanding organisational action. This is not only accomplished by becoming more attentive to how the material conditions enable and constrain stories. The point of intra-activity and the profound entanglement of the material and the discursive, individual and social, human and nature is that it implies an ethics of mattering where the 'I' and the 'Other' always are relationally and mutually constituted. They are inevitably entangled, intertwined and interwoven with each other in such a way that the dualism 'I – Other' is dissolved.

Matter is already entangled with the other. It is on one's skin, bones, belly, heart etc. Accordingly, the human subject is not the locus of ethicality. "We (but not only 'we humans') are always already responsible to the others with whom or which we are entangled, not through conscious intent but through the various ontological entanglements that materiality entails" (Barad, 2007: 393).

Ethics is therefore not about a right response to the other but rather about a fundamental responsibility and accountability for the lively material-discursive becoming of which we are part (ibid.: 393). Responsibility and accountability precede intentionality and cannot be restricted to human-human encounters but must take into account the intra-action and entanglement of materiality and discourse, of object and subject and of past, present and future (i.e. spacetime-matter).

This suggests that our responsibility is greater than if it was ours alone. Barad notes that if responsibility comprises an ongoing responsiveness to the entanglement of time, space and matter, then what seems far away in time or space may be very close due to the complexity of temporal and spatial connections that produce what matters and what is excluded from mattering in what takes place in the here and now (e.g. Barad, 2007: 394).

The implications are that we are at once less powerful and more powerful. We have become less powerful in the sense that our being is understood only as an intra-relational living story that is entangled and inter-changeable with nature, objects and subjects. We have become more powerful in the sense that our actions stretch beyond situated timespace-matter and reach out to other spaces, pasts, presents and futures; and our actions thus enter into the production of mattering on a far larger scale than we can possibly imagine.

The second major implication follows from the first, namely that postcolonial storytelling suggests that postcolonial phenomena and postcolonial discourse are the results of complex entangled genealogies where some voices (both human and non-human voices) play a more privileged role in material storytelling than others. A postcolonial storytelling of a postcolonial would thus imply material storytelling and antenarrative resistance and contestation to imperial and colonising monologic narratives of spatial and temporal alignment. We deal with three implications of this point below.

**Implication 1:** *In imperialist, colonising ideologies, there is a corresponding consolidation of storytelling authority that has material consequence.*

Specific narrative authority practices are opposed by living story and antenarrative

practices. Edward Said has argued that the ideology of imperialism parallels ‘narrative authority’ patterns of convergence: “We shall see the far from accidental convergence between the patterns of narrative authority constitutive of the novel on the one hand, and on the other, a complex ideological configuration underlying the tendency to imperialism” (Said, 1993: 69–70, cited in Caldwell, 1999: 304). The patterns of narrative authority integral to colonising mobilise modes of living story eventness and antenarrative resistance of possible futures deviating from the narrative authority enactments.

Caldwell, a literary critic, says that Confiant’s novel, *L’Allee des Sourirs* (1994), offers “a perspective particularly useful for an examination of *creolite’s* position as a postcolonial discourse” in “conflicted relation to French culture within Martinican society” (Caldwell, 1999: 308). Caldwell also argues that instead of carrying the Western values of polyphony, “harmony, order, and Cartesianism”, the countermove to narrative authority is grotesqueness, a collective voicing of cacophony with “no official, unitary, authoritative discourse” that is full of “subversion, resistance, survival, provocation” in the face of colonialism (ibid.: 304).

This grotesqueness is, for Bakhtin, in the more dialogic manner of story. Bakhtin’s (1981: 60) approach treats all narrative as monological and opposed to the more “dialogical manner of story.” For example, Bakhtin says that “Narrative genres are always enclosed in a solid and unshakable monological framework.” (1973: 12) Another way to disrupt colonial narrative authority is for the living stories of the marginalised to disrupt the dominant narrative sequence, its “temporal key” (Caldwell, 1999: 305).

For example, in Confiant’s *L’Allee Des Soupirs*, the Caribbean temporality “is not terrestrial but aquatic, a sinuous culture where time unfolds irregularly and resists being captured by the cycle of clock and calendar.” Instead of storytelling in a univocal, classically plotted linear temporal sequence, there are rhizomatic branches into pluralistic variants of the same event and fragments of several versions of a story abolish mainstream Western practices of linear or cyclic chronology.

The linear or cyclically plotted antenarrative is too tightly organised, too easy, too coherent, compared to the Creole’s living storying plurality that breaks out of the aesthetic lines of Western narrative authority. McCloskey makes a very important and relevant point: storytelling with cyclic (stage-by-stage) metaphors/models, such as the life cycle, are too abstract to be reliable in telling us about the future: “If the stories of past business cycles could predict the future there would be no surprises, and by that fact no business cycles.” (1990: 96) Other timespacemattering antenarrative patterns would include vortex and whirlpool spirals (Morson, 1994; Deluze, 1994: 21).

Narrative colonial authority is achieved by rewriting history; but the institutional myths situated in institutional domains also have (material) resource consequences (Meyer and Rowan, 1977). Said suggests that, in imperial enterprise, the written narrative functions as follows: “after the natives have been displaced from their historical location on their land, their history is rewritten as a function of the imperial one. This process uses narrative to dispel contradictory memories and occlude violence” (Said, 1993: 131–2, cited in Caldwell, 1999: 306).



Finally, with regard to the first implication, Caldwell points to the dilemma of the storytelling theorist in postcoloniality. While Confiant's storytelling – the chronological nonlinearity, its grounding in orality, the cacophony of structure – exhibits non-Western postclassical narrative style, it still has a “missing narrative authority”, the storytelling theorist, calling for aesthetic solution, using a male storyteller and privileging men's positions and colonialism's feminisation (Caldwell, 1999: 309).

The next two implications look at the postcolonial storytelling of space and time.

**Implication 2:** *Storytelling materialising practices create, traverse, feature or marginalise spatial alignments among the colonisers and the colonised or postcolonised from the local shop floor to the scale of global spaces.*

Since Henri Lefebvre's insistence that space and society are mutually constituted and “space is an agent of change”, there has been a paradigmatic shift questioning reified models of specialisation (Barad, 2007: 224). Lefebvre (1991: 26), for example, says that “(Social) space is a (social) product... the space thus produced also serves as a tool of thought and of action... in addition to being a means of production it is also a means of control, and hence of domination, of power.”

Castells' (1977) criticism of Lefebvre is that this approach to space is subjective Marxism (still in structuralism of Louis Althusser) rather than material. Castells focuses on how the past reaches into the present, whereas Lefebvre addresses space as a resource in more utopian, revolutionary aspects, to build an alternative future (Stalder, 2006: 144).

Michele de Certeau (1984: 118) treats the following as pairs of opposites: place and space; narrative and story practices; and strategy and tactics. Living story concerns spaces that embody movement, gesticulating, walking, talking and finding pleasure that for de Certeau (1984: 13) “indefinitely organizes a *here* in relation to an *abroad*, a ‘familiarity’ in relation to a foreignness.”

For de Certeau (1984), stories are spatialising, tours, all about movement, and founding spaces. Living stories are morphed by narrative into something highly abstract and linear as narratives go. The main function of living story is to found and to authorise (de Certeau, 1984: 123). Stories authorise by webs of material relationship practices, including many displacements, complexities and transgressions that upset narrative place limits because they are nonlinear (i.e. they do not conform to narrative plot lines with a beginning, middle and end).

In postcolonial studies, the notion of scale as local nested within national within global is problematic. Scale is produced in and through discursive phenomena, the spatialising through material-discursive apparatuses (Barad, 2007: 245). The local, the national and the global are, for Barad, not preexisting nested scales but “the agential enfolding of different scales through one another” not as “some physical notion of size but rather... understood as being intra-actively produced through one another.”

Postcolonial storytelling methods and inquiry can explore boundary transgressions where a contained spatialisation or geometrical understanding of scale simply reifies the phenomena. “The relationship between the local, the regional, the national, and the global



is not a geometrical nesting” (Barad, 2007: 246). The scales are topological matters, intra-actively produced through one another in material-discursive apparatuses of production that involve material-storytelling practices.

We turn next to the issue of storytelling-materiality consequences for temporality in postcolonial studies.

**Implication 3:** *Multiple story-in-the-making and antenarrative-in-the-making temporalities contest with monologic imperial/colonial temporal narratives with situated material effects.*

In postcolonial theory, managerialist narratives control time in Foucauldian disciplinary regimes of power, setting borders on bodies, and movements in this or that space, at this or that time. It is narrative that shapes these representations into power and control. Morson (1994) theorises storytelling as an interplay of backshadowing (narrative) pasts, sideshadowing (living story) multiple presentnesses, and foreshadowing the future (antenarrative) field of possibilities.

Such an approach could be informed by Barad’s agential realism. For Barad, time, space and matter are agential intra-actions of material-discursive (including storytelling) practices and apparatuses: “Temporality is constituted through the world’s iterative intra-activity” (2007: 180). Narrative construes temporality as evenly spaced events in a plot line. Narrative marks time linearly.

Barad offers several insights into petrification that can extend Czarniawska’s (2004) concept of ‘petrified narratives’ (i.e. that stronger corporate cultures have petrified narratives). First, the point is not that time leaves its mark in a petrified trail (in our case of narrative) sedimentation of external change, but rather that “sedimenting is an ongoing process of differential mattering” (Barad, 2007: 181). The past and future in storytelling are not sequential and linear; rather, they are enfolded participants in matter’s iterative becoming. Second, the petrification metaphor does nothing to “interrupt the persistent assumption that change is a continuous process through or in time” (ibid.: 182). Petrification narrative is a troubled notion since a “discontinuity queers our presumptions of continuity” and therefore cannot be the opposite of a continuum of petrified narrative stability (ibid.: 182).

Third, each ring, as a quantum leap of discontinuous discontinuity, does and cannot assure the quantum of when and where the ring-leap happened because it does not examine the intra-play of continuity and discontinuity, determinacy and indeterminacy, or possibility and impossibility that constitutes the differential storytelling.

## Conclusions

The central issue raised here is the materiality of storytelling and its contribution to rethinking postcolonial theory and practice. For the most part, a representational focus

on narrative structuralism misses the exploration of the contexts of meaning production. Classical narrative, in particular evokes narrative expectations that are part of the colonisation of the storytelling intercultural worlds.

Euro-American narrative textual expectations (structuralism) include the urge to fix living stories and antenarratives with a linear plot logic of beginning, middle and end; and demands to erase contextual complexity and differences in order to abstract dead structural categories.

Orality exchanges, particularly those of indigenous peoples, are marginalised in favour of dead narratives that can be framed, stacked and sorted into typologies which ignore material conditions. What remains are the representations and the resistance to decontextualised narrative and their normalised rationality (monologic) that erase the historical process of colonial production.

On the one hand, postcolonial theorists and critics claim to be outside observers who freely choose among possible discursive practices, labelling them 'colonial', 'neocolonial', 'imperialist' and the like. On the other hand, postcolonial theorists and critics argue against Cartesian boundaries between knower and known. Ironically, postcolonial concepts are embodied in human subjects yet strangely disembodied in the analyses of discursive representations.

Postcolonial theory has been focused on discursive representationalism and not on narrative (except for a few literary studies). Certainly, it has not focused at all on material-story-in-the-making and antenarrative-in-the-making (both of which are domains of discourse intra-active to material conditions). Representational discursive strategies appear more the norm in postcolonial studies. While quite important in establishing the representations of gender, race and class in colonialism, the separation of the discursive approach from material conditions leaves agential intra-activity of storytelling-materiality unexplored.

Postcolonial theory could set the counter-narratives (Bamberg, 2004b) into a clear institutional setting. Instead of the duality of rebellious living storytellers versus hegemonic institutional narrative plots, one could theorise a triangle: (1) the dominant narrative line of managerial control; (2) the counter-story of individual resistance; and (3) storylines of individual compliance and accommodation to managerial control. This would give a more nuanced analysis of the contestation interaction.

Material storytelling offers a more material-discursive approach to postcoloniality that makes a significant move beyond social constructivism, which, in the main, does not attend to material conditions or power – or worse, assumes material-body and mind-sensemaking are dichotomous, despite protests against Cartesian duality. In the proposed storytelling-materiality approach, postcolonial studies could reclaim a narrative focus (like that, for instance, in Said's work on Orientalism) but pursue it with more of an agential intra-play between story-in-the-making (and antenarrative-in-the-making) and the materiality of (post) colonialism, its material conditions.

Postcolonial practices are enacted in such a way that the supposed boundaries between coloniser and colonised are ambivalent. The advantage to postcolonial studies of mate-

rial-storytelling is that it includes 'native American indian' storytelling, which, unlike the structuralist textuality concerns of Western narrative (plot, characterisation etc.), is more rooted in orality and the ritual, interactional and embedded practices of a storytelling community engaged in material practices. There is interplay between representational narrative and living story, brought out in the study of antenarrative processes.

In its managerial practice, storytelling is an embodiment that is materially embodied by organisations, situated in the shop floor, the board room and the shopping mall. Postcoloniality aims to redress the structural inequalities of gender, race, class and sexuality in the gender-telling, race-telling, class-telling and sexuality-telling practices of colonialism, imperialism and neocolonialism.

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